Claims

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1. A method for gathering information on a state of a computer system, said method comprising:

providing a dictionary file having a plurality of inquiries for ascertaining state information on said computer system, said plurality of inquiries being organized into at least one subject group, each subject group being directed to a different piece of said state information, at least one group of said at least one subject group having multiple records of inquiry; and

processing at least one inquiry of said plurality of inquiries of said dictionary file to accumulate said state information, said processing comprising for each group of said at least one group having multiple records of inquiry:

processing a record of said multiple records of inquiry, and if a condition of said record is satisfied then terminating processing of said group, otherwise processing a next record of said multiple records of inquiry and continuing until a condition of one record of said multiple records of inquiry is satisfied or all records of said multiple records of inquiry of said group have been processed.

1   2.   The method of claim 1, wherein said at least one
2 subject group comprises multiple subject groups, and wherein
3 said processing of each group of said at least one group
4 having multiple records of inquiry comprises proceeding to a
5 next group of said multiple subject groups when said
6 condition of one record of said multiple records of inquiry
7 in said at least one group is satisfied.

1   3.   The method of claim 1, wherein at least some
2 inquiries of said plurality of inquiries comprise
3 instructions, each instruction providing a result when a
4 condition of said instruction is satisfied.

1   4.   The method of claim 3, further comprising
2 collecting results of said instructions into a file, said
3 file being representative of said state of said computer
4 system.

1   5.   The method of claim 4, wherein each inquiry of said
2 plurality of inquiries is an instruction which provides a
3 result when a condition of said instruction is satisfied.

1   6.   The method of claim 4, wherein said processing
2 comprises processing each group of said at least one subject
3 group, and wherein said method further comprises transferring
4 said file to an information repository coupled to said
5 computer system across a network.

1   7.   The method of claim 6, wherein said computer system
2 comprises one computer system of a plurality of computer
3 systems coupled to said network.

1   8.   The method of claim 1, wherein said dictionary file
2 comprises a rules database in an ASCII file.

1   9.   The method of claim 1, wherein at least one record
2 of inquiry of said multiple records of inquiry comprises an
3 instruction which provides a result when a condition of said
4 instruction is satisfied, said result comprising state
5 information for said group having said record when the
6 condition of said instruction is satisfied.

1   10. The method of claim 1, wherein said computer system
2 comprises one computer system within a network of computer
3 systems, and wherein said providing comprises reading said
4 dictionary file from a server coupled to said network of
5 computer systems to said one computer system to gather said
6 state information thereon.

1   11. The method of claim 10, further comprising
2 forwarding results representative of gathered state
3 information to an information repository coupled to said
4 network of computer systems, said information repository
5 residing at said server system providing said dictionary
6 file.

1   12. The method of claim 1, wherein said processing
2 comprises processing each group of said at least one subject
3 group, and setting group substitution variables for output
4 upon initiation of processing of each group of said at least
5 one subject group.

1   13.   The method of claim 1, wherein said multiple
2 records of inquiry of said at least one group comprise at
3 least one of a file check inquiry, a file content check
4 inquiry, an external process check inquiry, or a default
5 inquiry for said group.

1   14. The method of claim 1, wherein said plurality of
2 inquiries comprise multiple inquiry types, and wherein said
3 multiple inquiry types comprise at least some of:

4   a file inquiry which checks for existence of a file
5   of a certain date, time or size and which can return
6   file information;

7   an INI file inquiry which checks for a certain
8   application, variable and value, and which can return a
9   certain value or one or more variables and values;

10   an ASCII file inquiry which checks for a certain
11   character string in a file, and which can return
12   information on a line within the character string;

13   a registry inquiry which checks for a certain
14   registry tree or value, and which can return one or more
15   values in a tree or sub-tree;

16   an external process inquiry using an INI output,
17   which comprises executing an external process and
18   performing an INI file inquiry on the result;

19   an external process inquiry which executes an
20   external process, provides an ASCII output, and performs
21   an ASCII file inquiry on the result;

22   an external process inquiry using a registry, which
23   executes an external process and performs a registry
24   inquiry on the result; and

25   multiple inquiries which comprise a combination of
26   multiple other inquiry types, where all must succeed.

1   15.   A method for gathering information on a state of a
2 computer system, said method comprising:

3   providing a dictionary file having a plurality of
4   inquiries for ascertaining said state information on
5   said computer system, at least one inquiry of said
6   plurality of inquiries comprising an instruction having
7   a result which is output when a condition of said
8   instruction is satisfied; and

9   processing at least one inquiry of said plurality
10   of inquiries of said dictionary file to accumulate said
11   state information, said processing comprising for each
12   instruction, outputting said result of said instruction
13   from said dictionary file when said condition of said
14   instruction is satisfied, wherein said state information
15   on said computer system comprises outputted results from
16   satisfaction of said at least one instruction.

1   16.   The method of claim 15, wherein said at least one
2 inquiry comprising said instruction comprises multiple
3 inquiries of said plurality of inquiries, each instruction
4 having a result which is output when a condition of said
5 instruction is satisfied.

1   17.   The method of claim 16, further comprising
2 collecting results of said instructions into a file, said
3 file being representative of said state of the computer
4 system.

1   18.   The method of claim 17, wherein each inquiry of
2 said plurality of inquiries is an instruction which provides
3 a result when a condition of said instruction is satisfied.

1   19. The method of claim 17, further comprising
2 transferring said file to an information repository coupled
3 to said computer system across a network.

1   20. The method of claim 19, wherein said computer
2 system comprises one computer system of a plurality of
3 computer systems coupled to said network.

1   21. The method of claim 15, wherein said dictionary
2 file comprises a rules database defined in an ASCII file.

1   22. The method of claim 15, wherein said computer
2 system comprises one computer system within a network of
3 computer systems, and wherein said providing comprises
4 reading said dictionary file from a server coupled to said
5 network to said one computer system to gather said state
6 information thereon.

1   23. The method of claim 22, wherein said reading of
2 said dictionary file is performed by an inquiry tool routine
3 located on said one computer system.

1   24. The method of claim 22, further comprising
2 forwarding results representative of gathered state
3 information to an information repository of said network of
4 computer systems, said information repository residing at
5 said server providing said dictionary file.

1   25. The method of claim 15, wherein said plurality of
2 inquiries comprise at least one of a file check inquiry, a
3 file content check inquiry, an external process check
4 inquiry, or a default inquiry.

1   26.   The method of claim 15, wherein said plurality of
2 inquiries comprise multiple inquiry types, and wherein said
3 multiple inquiry types comprise at least some of:

4   a file inquiry which checks for existence of a file
5   of a certain date, time or size and which can return
6   file information;

7   an INI file inquiry which checks for a certain
8   application, variable and value, and which can return a
9   certain value, or one or more variables and values;

10   an ASCII file inquiry which checks for a certain
11   character string in a file, and which can return
12   information on a line within the character string;

13   a registry inquiry which checks for a certain
14   registry tree or value, and which can return one or more
15   values in a tree or sub-tree;

16   an external process inquiry using an INI output,
17   which comprises executing an external process and
18   performing an INI file inquiry on the result;

19   an external process inquiry which executes an
20   external process, provides an ASCII output, and performs
21   an ASCII file inquiry on the result;

22   an external process inquiry using a registry, which
23   executes an external process and performs a registry
24   inquiry on the result; and

25   multiple inquiries which comprise a combination of
26   multiple other inquiry types, where all must succeed.

1   27. The method of claim 15, wherein said plurality of
2 inquiries are organized into at least one subject group, each
3 subject group being directed to a different piece of said
4 state information, at least one group of the at least one
5 subject group having multiple instructions, and processing
6 each instruction of each group of the at least one group
7 having multiple instructions such that if a condition of the
8 instruction is satisfied then terminating processing of the
9 group, otherwise processing a next instruction of the
10 multiple instructions within the group and continuing until a
11 condition of one instruction of the multiple instructions is
12 satisfied or until all instructions of the multiple
13 instructions of the group have been processed.

1   28. A memory for storing a dictionary file data
2 structure, the dictionary file data structure facilitating
3 gathering of information on a state of a computer system, the
4 dictionary file data structure comprising:

5   a plurality of inquiries for ascertaining state
6   information on the computer system, said plurality of
7   inquiries being organized into at least one subject
8   group, each subject group being directed to a different
9   piece of said state information, at least one group of
10   the at least one subject group having multiple records
11   of inquiry; and

12   wherein the multiple records of inquiry of the at
13   least one group comprise multiple instructions, each
14   instruction comprising a result to be output when a
15   condition of said instruction is satisfied, wherein
16   outputting of a result from one instruction terminates
17   processing of said at least one group having multiple
18   records of inquiry.

1   29. A memory for storing a dictionary file data
2 structure, the dictionary file data structure facilitating
3 gathering information on a state of a computer system, the
4 dictionary file data structure comprising:

5   a plurality of inquiries for ascertaining said
6   state information on said computer system, at least one
7   inquiry of the plurality of inquiries comprising an
8   instruction having a result which is output when a
9   condition of said instruction is satisfied.

1   30. A system for gathering information on a state of a
2   computer system, said system comprising:

3   means for providing a dictionary file having a
4   plurality of inquiries for ascertaining state
5   information on said computer system, said plurality of
6   inquiries being organized into at least one subject
7   group, each subject group being directed to a different
8   piece of said state information, at least one group of
9   said at least one subject group having multiple records
10   of inquiry; and

11   means for processing at least one inquiry of said
12   plurality of inquiries of said dictionary file to
13   accumulate said state information, said means for
14   processing comprises for each group of said at least one
15   group having multiple records of inquiry:

16   means for processing a record of said multiple
17   records of inquiry, and if a condition of said
18   record is satisfied then for terminating processing
19   of said group, otherwise for processing a next
20   record of said multiple records of inquiry and
21   continuing until a condition of one record of said
22   multiple records of inquiry is satisfied or all
23   records of said multiple records of inquiry of said
24   group have been processed.

1   31.   The system of claim 30, wherein said at least one
2 subject group comprises multiple subject groups, and wherein
3 said means for processing of each group of said at least one
4 group having multiple records of inquiry comprises means for
5 proceeding to a next group of said multiple subject groups
6 when said condition of one record of said multiple records of
7 inquiry in said at least one group is satisfied.

1   32.   The system of claim 30, wherein at least some
2 inquiries of said plurality of inquiries comprise
3 instructions, each instruction providing a result when a
4 condition of said instruction is satisfied.

1   33.   The system of claim 32, further comprising means
2 for collecting results of said instructions into a file, said
3 file being representative of said state of said computer
4 system.

1   34.   The system of claim 33, wherein each inquiry of
2 said plurality of inquiries is an instruction which provides
3 a result when a condition of said instruction is satisfied.

1   35.   The system of claim 33, wherein said means for
2 processing comprises means for processing each group of said
3 at least one subject group, and wherein said system further
4 comprises means for transferring said file to an information
5 repository coupled to said computer system across a network.

1   36.   The system of claim 35, wherein said computer
2 system comprises one computer system of a plurality of
3 computer systems coupled to said network.

1   37. The system of claim 30, wherein said dictionary
2 file comprises a rules database in an ASCII file.

1   38. The system of claim 30, wherein said means for
2 processing comprises means for processing each group of said
3 at least one subject group, and means for setting group
4 substitution variables for output upon initiation of
5 processing of each group of said at least one subject group.

1   39. The system of claim 30, wherein said multiple
2 records of inquiry of said at least one group comprise at
3 least one of a file check inquiry, a file content check
4 inquiry, an external process check inquiry, or a default
5 inquiry for said group.

1   40. The system of claim 30, wherein said plurality of
2 inquiries comprise multiple inquiry types, and wherein said
3 multiple inquiry types comprise at least some of:

4   a file inquiry which checks for existence of a file
5   of a certain date, time or size and which can return
6   file information;

7   an INI file inquiry which checks for a certain
8   application, variable and value, and which can return a
9   certain value or one or more variables and values;

10   an ASCII file inquiry which checks for a certain
11   character string in a file, and which can return
12   information on a line within the character string;

13   a registry inquiry which checks for a certain
14   registry tree or value, and which can return one or more
15   values in a tree or sub-tree;

16   an external process inquiry using an INI output,
17   which comprises executing an external process and
18   performing an INI file inquiry on the result;

19   an external process inquiry which executes an
20   external process, provides an ASCII output, and performs
21   an ASCII file inquiry on the result;

22   an external process inquiry using a registry, which
23   executes an external process and performs a registry
24   inquiry on the result; and

25   multiple inquiries which comprise a combination of
26   multiple other inquiry types, where all must succeed.

1   41.   A system for gathering information on a state of a
2 computer system, said system comprising:

3   means for providing a dictionary file having a
4   plurality of inquiries for ascertaining said state
5   information on said computer system, at least one
6   inquiry of said plurality of inquiries comprising an
7   instruction having a result which is output when a
8   condition of said instruction is satisfied; and

9   means for processing said at least one inquiry of
10   said plurality of inquiries of said dictionary file to
11   accumulate said state information, said means for
12   processing comprising for each instruction, means for
13   outputting said result of said instruction from said
14   dictionary file when said condition of said instruction
15   is satisfied, wherein said state information on said
16   computer system comprises any outputted results from
17   satisfaction of said at least one instruction.

1   42.   The system of claim 41, wherein said at least one
2 inquiry comprising said instruction comprises multiple
3 inquiries of said plurality of inquiries, each instruction
4 having a result which is output when a condition of said
5 instruction is satisfied.

1   43.   The system of claim 42, further comprising means
2 for collecting results of said instructions into a file, said
3 file being representative of said state of the computer
4 system.

1   44. The system of claim 43, wherein each inquiry of
2   said plurality of inquiries is an instruction which provides
3   a result when a condition of said instruction is satisfied.

1   45. The system of claim 43, further comprising means
2   for transferring said file to an information repository
3   coupled to said computer system across a network.

1   46. The system of claim 45, wherein said computer
2   system comprises one computer system of a plurality of
3   computer systems coupled to said network.

1   47. The system of claim 41, wherein said dictionary
2   file comprises a rules database defined in an ASCII file.

1   48. The system of claim 41, wherein said plurality of
2   inquiries comprise at least one of a file check inquiry, a
3   file content check inquiry, an external process check
4   inquiry, or a default inquiry.

1   49. The system of claim 41, wherein said plurality of
2   inquiries comprise multiple inquiry types, and wherein said
3   multiple inquiry types comprise at least some of:

4   a file inquiry which checks for existence of a file
5   of a certain date, time or size and which can return
6   file information;

7   an INI file inquiry which checks for a certain
8   application, variable and value, and which can return a
9   certain value, or one or more variables and values;

10   an ASCII file inquiry which checks for a certain
11   character string in a file, and which can return
12   information on a line within the character string;

13   a registry inquiry which checks for a certain
14   registry tree or value, and which can return one or more
15   values in a tree or sub-tree;

16   an external process inquiry using an INI output,
17   which comprises executing an external process and
18   performing an INI file inquiry on the result;

19   an external process inquiry which executes an
20   external process, provides an ASCII output, and performs
21   an ASCII file inquiry on the result;

22   an external process inquiry using a registry, which
23   executes an external process and performs a registry
24   inquiry on the result; and

25   multiple inquiries which comprise a combination of
26   multiple other inquiry types, where all must succeed.

1   50.   The system of claim 41, wherein said plurality of
2   inquiries are organized into at least one subject group, each
3   subject group being directed to a different piece of said
4   state information, at least one group of the at least one
5   subject group having multiple instructions, and said system
6   comprising means for processing each instruction of each
7   group of the at least one group having multiple instructions
8   such that if a condition of the instruction is satisfied
9   processing of the group is terminated, otherwise a next
10   instruction of the multiple instructions within the group is
11   processed and continuing until a condition of one instruction
12   of the multiple instructions is satisfied or until all
13   instructions of the multiple instructions of the group have
14   been processed.

1   51. At least one program storage device readable by a
2 machine, tangibly embodying at least one program of
3 instructions executable by the machine to perform a method
4 for gathering information on a state of a computer system,
5 said method comprising:

6   providing a dictionary file having a plurality of
7   inquiries for ascertaining state information on said
8   computer system, said plurality of inquiries being
9   organized into at least one subject group, each subject,
10   group being directed to a different piece of said state
11   information, at least one group of said at least one
12   subject group having multiple records of inquiry; and

13   processing at least one inquiry of said plurality
14   of inquiries of said dictionary file to accumulate said
15   state information, said processing comprising for each
16   group of said at least one group having multiple records
17   of inquiry:

18   processing a record of said multiple records
19   of inquiry, and if a condition of said record is
20   satisfied then terminating processing of said
21   group, otherwise processing a next record of said
22   multiple records of inquiry and continuing until a
23   condition of one record of said multiple records of
24   inquiry is satisfied or all records of said
25   multiple records of inquiry of said group have been
26   processed.

1   52. The at least one program storage device of claim
2 51, wherein said at least one subject group comprises
3 multiple subject groups, and wherein said processing of each
4 group of said at least one group having multiple records of
5 inquiry comprises proceeding to a next group of said multiple
6 subject groups when said condition of one record of said
7 multiple records of inquiry in said at least one group is
8 satisfied.

1   53. The at least one program storage device of claim
2 51, wherein at least some inquiries of said plurality of
3 inquiries comprise instructions, each instruction providing a
4 result when a condition of said instruction is satisfied.

1   54. The at least one program storage device of claim
2 53, further comprising collecting results of said
3 instructions into a file, said file being representative of
4 said state of said computer system.

1   55. The at least one program storage device of claim
2 54, wherein each inquiry of said plurality of inquiries is an
3 instruction which provides a result when a condition of said
4 instruction is satisfied.

1   56. The at least one program storage device of claim
2 54, wherein said processing comprises processing each group
3 of said at least one subject group, and wherein said method
4 further comprises transferring said file to an information
5 repository coupled to said computer system across a network.

1   57.   The at least one program storage device of claim
2 56, wherein said computer system comprises one computer
3 system of a plurality of computer systems coupled to said
4 network.

1   58.   The at least one program storage device of claim
2 51, wherein said dictionary file comprises a rules database
3 in an ASCII file.

1   59.   The at least one program storage device of claim
2 51, wherein said multiple records of inquiry of said at least
3 one group comprise at least one of a file check inquiry, a
4 file content check inquiry, an external process check
5 inquiry, or a default inquiry for said group.

1   60.   The at least one program storage device of claim
2 51, wherein said plurality of inquiries comprise multiple
3 inquiry types, and wherein said multiple inquiry types
4 comprise at least some of:

5   a file inquiry which checks for existence of a file
6   of a certain date, time or size and which can return
7   file information;

8   an INI file inquiry which checks for a certain
9   application, variable and value, and which can return a
10   certain value or one or more variables and values;

11   an ASCII file inquiry which checks for a certain
12   character string in a file, and which can return
13   information on a line within the character string;

14   a registry inquiry which checks for a certain
15   registry tree or value, and which can return one or more
16   values in a tree or sub-tree;

17   an external process inquiry using an INI output,
18   which comprises executing an external process and
19   performing an INI file inquiry on the result;

20   an external process inquiry which executes an
21   external process, provides an ASCII output, and performs
22   an ASCII file inquiry on the result;

23   an external process inquiry using a registry, which
24   executes an external process and performs a registry
25   inquiry on the result; and

26   multiple inquiries which comprise a combination of
27   multiple other inquiry types, where all must succeed.

61. At least one program storage device readable by a machine tangibly embodying at least one program of instructions executable by the machine to perform a method for gathering information on a state of a computer system, said method comprising:

    providing a dictionary file having a plurality of inquiries for ascertaining said state information on said computer system, at least one inquiry of said plurality of inquiries comprising an instruction having a result which is output when a condition of said instruction is satisfied; and

    processing at least one inquiry of said plurality of inquiries of said dictionary file to accumulate said state information, said processing comprising for each instruction, outputting said result of said instruction from said dictionary file when said condition of said instruction is satisfied, wherein said state information on said computer system comprises outputted results from satisfaction of said at least one instruction.

62. The at least one program storage device of claim 61, wherein said at least one inquiry comprising said instruction comprises multiple inquiries of said plurality of inquiries, each instruction having a result which is output when a condition of said instruction is satisfied.

1   63. The at least one program storage device of claim
2   62, further comprising collecting results of said
3   instructions into a file, said file being representative of
4   said state of the computer system.

1   64. The at least one program storage device of claim
2   63, wherein each inquiry of said plurality of inquiries is an
3   instruction which provides a result when a condition of said
4   instruction is satisfied.

1   65. The at least one program storage device of claim
2   63, further comprising transferring said file to an
3   information repository coupled to said computer system across
4   a network.

1   66. The at least one program storage device of claim
2   65, wherein said computer system comprises one computer
3   system of a plurality of computer systems coupled to said
4   network.

1   67. The at least one program storage device of claim
2   61, wherein said dictionary file comprises a rules database
3   defined in an ASCII file.

1   68. The at least one program storage device of claim
2   61, wherein said plurality of inquiries comprise at least one
3   of a file check inquiry, a file content check inquiry, an
4   external process check inquiry, or a default inquiry.

1   69. The at least one program storage device of claim
2 61, wherein said plurality of inquiries comprise multiple
3 inquiry types, and wherein said multiple inquiry types
4 comprise at least some of:

5   a file inquiry which checks for existence of a file
6   of a certain date, time or size and which can return
7   file information;

8   an INI file inquiry which checks for a certain
9   application, variable and value, and which can return a
10   certain value, or one or more variables and values;

11   an ASCII file inquiry which checks for a certain
12   character string in a file, and which can return
13   information on a line within the character string;

14   a registry inquiry which checks for a certain
15   registry tree or value, and which can return one or more
16   values in a tree or sub-tree;

17   an external process inquiry using an INI output,
18   which comprises executing an external process and
19   performing an INI file inquiry on the result;

20   an external process inquiry which executes an
21   external process, provides an ASCII output, and performs
22   an ASCII file inquiry on the result;

23   an external process inquiry using a registry, which
24   executes an external process and performs a registry
25   inquiry on the result; and

26   multiple inquiries which comprise a combination of
27   multiple other inquiry types, where all must succeed.

1   70. The at least one program storage device of claim
2   61, wherein said plurality of inquiries are organized into at
3   least one subject group, each subject group being directed to
4   a different piece of said state information, at least one
5   group of the at least one subject group having multiple
6   instructions, and processing each instruction of each group
7   of the at least one group having multiple instructions such
8   that if a condition of the instruction is satisfied then
9   terminating processing of the group, otherwise processing a
10   next instruction of the multiple instructions within the
11   group and continuing until a condition of one instruction of
12   the multiple instructions is satisfied or until all
13   instructions of the multiple instructions of the group have
14   been processed.

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